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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO USMISSION BERLIN

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E. O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOVIET REACTION TO FRENCH ELECTIONS

1. MARCH 13 LE FIGARO CARRIES WHAT STRIKES US AS PERCEPTIVE ANALYSIS BY MOSCOW CORRESPONDENT ROBERT LACONTRE OF SOVIET REACTION TO JUST- CONCLUDED FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. IN ARTICLE HEADLINED " BREZHNEV HAD CHOSEN POMPIDOU," LACONTRE RECALLS JANUARY 11-12 POMPIDOU- BREZHNEV SUMMIT IN BELORUSSIA AND NOTES SOVIET LEADER " HAD VOTED FOR POMPIDOU, AS HE HAD EARLIER CHOSEN NIXON AND BRANDT." LACONTRE EMPHASIZES BREZHNEV MADE THESE CHOICES BECAUSE USSR NEEDS " INTERNATIONAL STABILITY TO REALIZE ITS GREAT OBJECTIVES: DETENTE, SECURITY, AND COOPERATION."

2. STATING SOVIET ANALYSTS HAD SEEN LIKELIHOOD OF REDUCTION IN GAULLISTS' STRENGTH, " BUT NOT ENOUGH TO PUT THEM IN DANGER," LACONTRE BELIEVES KREMLIN ADVISED FRENCH COMMUNISTS

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TO PURSUE CAMPAIGN " BY THE PATH OF LEGITIMACY, NOT TURMOIL." HE REASONS THAT COMMUNIST - SOCIALIST VICTORY IN FRANCE WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY SET BACK BREZHNEV' S " PEACE OFFENSIVE," PROVOKING FEARS AMONG MANY EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS AND RULING OUT CONVOCAION OF CSCE. POMPIDOU, ON OTHER HAND, REPRESENTS FOR MOSCOW " THE SINCERE DIALOGUE" AND CONTINUATION OF FRENCH SUPPORT FOR CERTAIN SOVIET IDEAS. AT SAME TIME, BREZHNEV KNOWS POMPIDOU IS " CREDIBLE" TO HIS ATLANTIC AND EUROPEAN ALLIES-- WHILE MITTERRAND AND MARCHAIS ARE NOT.

3. ARGUING THAT MOSCOW VALUES GAULLIST SUPPORT FOR STEADY GROWTH OF FRENCH- SOVIET ECONOMIC TIES, LACONTRE ASSERTS SOVIETS LOOK FORWARD TO SIGNING IMPORTANT CONTRACTS WITH BIG FRENCH (AND OTHER WESTERN) FIRMS. HE BELIEVES SOVIETS CALCULATED THAT VICTORY OF LEFT WOULD HAVE UPSET FRENCH ECONOMY AND, AT VERY LEAST, DELAYED SUCH CONTRACTS.

4. ALL THIS, IN LACONTRE' S VIEW, CAUSED SOVIET PRESS TO TAKE " PARTICULARLY MODERATE" LINE IN APPRAISING FRENCH ELECTIONS. HE REPORTS SOVIETS TOOK NOTE OF STRUGGLE BETWEEN RULING " BOURGEOIS COALITION" AND THE LEFT, STRESSED STRENGTHENING OF THE LATTER, REFERRED TO " UNFAIR" GERRYMANDERING AGAINST COMMUNISTS, AND PLAYED DOWN CURRENT ASCENDANCY OF FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY.

5. IN CONCLUSION, LACONTRE MAKES CASE THAT SOVIET REACTION TO FRENCH ELECTIONS WAS PERFORCE RESTRAINED " FOR IT IS PRECISELY MR. POMPIDOU WHO WILL RECEIVE BREZHNEV ONCE MORE IN FRANCE IN A FEW MONTHS, WHEN HE WILL RETURN THE VISIT AND RENEW THE TETE- A- TETE OF MINSK."

6. COMMENT: FRENCH- SOVIET RELATIONS APPEAR TO HAVE EMERGED VIRTUALLY UNAFFECTED FROM LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, DESPITE SOVIETS' TEMPORARY POLEMIC WITH GAULLIST DAILY A NATION (PARIS 2267 AND 3375) AND POMPIDOU' S INCREASING RESORT TO ANTI- COMMUNIST SCARE TACTICS TOWARD END OF CAMPAIGN. IRONICALLY, WHILE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY AND SOVIETS SHARE SATISFACTION WITH ELECTION RESULTS, MANY FRENCH COMMUNISTS GRUMBLE THAT BREZHNEV WENT UNNECESSARILY FAR TO ACCOMMODATE POMPIDOU. REFLECTING THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS IS REPORT FROM LE MONDE ANALYST MICHEL TATU THAT SOVIET OFFICIAL IN MOSCOW HAS EXPRESSED RELIEF TO A FRENCH FRIEND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT GAULLISTS WILL CONTINUE TO CONTROL FRENCH FOREIGN

POLICY.

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